Partitive Articles vs. Bare Nouns in Northern Italy, a morphological parameter

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Setting the scene: Romance indefinites

The encoding of indefinite arguments varies within Romance languages (Delfitto & Schroter 1991, Stark 2016 a.o.). **BNs** in **Sp.** and **PAs in Fr:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SP.</th>
<th>FR.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Como</td>
<td>Je mange <em>(du)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pan. /</td>
<td>pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat.1sg bread / I</td>
<td>eat.1sg of.the.M.sg bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I eat bread.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Como</td>
<td>Je mange <em>(des)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cerezas /</td>
<td>cerises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat.1sg cherries / I</td>
<td>eat.1.sg of.the.pl cherries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I eat cherries.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting the scene: Romance indefinites

**Italian** has both BNs and PAs:

- **Mangio (del) pane.**
  eat.1sg (of.the.m.sg) bread
  ‘I eat bread’

- **Mangio (delle) ciliegie.**
  eat.1sg (of.the.f.pl) cherries
  ‘I eat cherries

*Is this optionality or rather division of labor?*

*Do Italian PAs and BNs completely/partially overlap in their distribution or not?*
Setting the scene: NIDs, more variation

- *Kargá d 1 aldam.* (Sermide, MN = PA)
  load of the manure
- *Ćamá: Ø ledana.* (Moggio, UD = BN)
  load manure
- *El kérg ul rú.* (Monza, MI = def article)
  he loads the manure
- *Ćar gió d yám.* (Ala di Stura, TO = bare DE)
  load of manure

AIS, map 1179

*caricare del letame* ‘to load (some) manure’
Research questions

• What is the distribution of BNs/PAs/bare DE/def in NIDs?

• Do they all compete for the semantic field of indefiniteness?
  • Definite articles too?

• How can we model the variation attested?

• What is the grammatical source of such variation?
Hypothesis

• There is no optionality between BN and PAs in the languages that have both:
  • PAs include a quantity BNs do not
  • Specificity depends on quantity, hence BNs are never specific
  • The presence of BNs correlates with the presence of number morphology on (regular) masculine Ns.
Methodology: ASIt

In order to assess the variation we analyze:

A. Data from ASIt.
   i. 13 input sentences with BNs/PAs/definite articles. → 2130 output sentences across dialects

Problems:
• Unbalanced stimuli for type of indefinite: 6 BNs / 6 def / 1 PA.
• Unbalanced polarity. BNs: 5 neg – 1 pos; PAs: 1 neg – 0 pos; def: 2 neg – 4 pos.
Methodology: new fieldwork

In order to avoid the problems of the ASIt data set:

B. Data from three new fieldwork sessions:

i. Ligurian (Arenzano, 3 speakers), Mantuan Emilian (Viadana, Dosolo, 8 speakers), West / Central-eastern Friulian (Cordenons, Zoppola / Mossa, Romans d’Isonzo, S. Lorenzo Isontino, Chiopris, 7 speakers).

ii. Questionnaire (70 sentences balanced for polarity, gender, number, left/right dislocation, PA/BN/definite input + 29 fillers).
Excluding definites: ASIt

Definite articles from input BNs

Definite articles from input definite articles

Same distribution in all NIDs!
Excluding definites: new data

New data, same pattern:
- definite input → always definite output
- BN/PA input → few cases of definite in the output in each variety

NO VARIATION!
Excluding definites: Generic/weak definites

The cases of definite articles used when the input has an indefinite BN/PA are G/WDs.

NIDs have G/WDs with the same distribution of the other Romance languages. This is unrelated to whether the language has BNs/PAs or other indefinites, and in which contexts.

We exclude them from our analysis of the variation in the realization of indefinite objects in NIDs.
A first answer: RQ2

Do they all compete for the semantic field of indefiniteness?
Definite articles too?

NO

Lack of interdependence between the possible realizations of indefinites and the availability/distribution of G/WDs → two different semantic fields

Following: Carlson & Sussman (2005), Schwarz (2014) and Aguilar-Guevara (2014), Corblin (2013)
Distribution of BNs: ASIt

1: BN input $\rightarrow$ BN output
   - yes-all / yes-some / no

2: PA input $\rightarrow$ BN output
   - yes / no

3: Def input $\rightarrow$ BN output
   - yes / no

The “BN area”:
- (almost) every BN in the input $\rightarrow$ BN

It is attested:
- PA $\rightarrow$ BN
- Def $\rightarrow$ BN
Distribution of PAs: ASIt

1: BN input \(\rightarrow\) PA output
2: PA input \(\rightarrow\) PA output
3: Def input \(\rightarrow\) PA output

The “PA area”. (almost) every PA in the input \(\rightarrow\) PA

It is attested:

- BN \(\rightarrow\) PA
- Def \(\rightarrow\) PA
Distribution of bare DE: ASIt

1: BN input $\rightarrow$ bareDE output
   - yes-all / yes-some / no

2: PA input $\rightarrow$ bareDE output
   - yes / no

3: Def input $\rightarrow$ bareDE output
   - yes / no

The “bare DE area”:
It is attested:
- BN $\rightarrow$ bare DE
- PA $\rightarrow$ bare DE
- Def $\rightarrow$ bare DE
Our fieldwork: Emilian

Only PAs

* Only by young and interfered speakers
Our fieldwork: Friulian

BNs+lex-q

lex-q = *un pok/alk* ‘a bit’; *kualki* ‘some’

* Only by young and interfered speakers
Bare DE and negation

The presence of bare DE is dependent on negation.

Bare DE can only appear with negative polarity (Battye 1990)

See Garzonio & Poletto (2020) for further details on the distribution of bare DE in these varieties and in Valtellina
Our fieldwork: Ligurian

Two varieties: Lig1 / Lig2

Ligurian1

BN input → PAs

(one single BN, given as an additional option for a PA; appendix)

Ligurian2

BN input → BNs

(one single PA; appendix)
## Distribution of indefinites: RQ1

**What is the distribution of BNs/PAs/bare DE in NIDs?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>BN Input</th>
<th>PA Input</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emilian</strong></td>
<td>BN input $\rightarrow$ PA</td>
<td>PA input $\rightarrow$ PA</td>
<td>$\cong$ French (modulo no bare DE with neg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friulian</strong></td>
<td>BN input $\rightarrow$ BN</td>
<td>PA input $\rightarrow$ BN + lex-q(uantity)</td>
<td>$\cong$ Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lex-q = <em>un pok/alk</em> ‘a bit’; <em>kualki</em> ‘some’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ligurian1</strong></td>
<td>BN input $\rightarrow$ PA (+ bare DE under neg)</td>
<td>PA input $\rightarrow$ PA</td>
<td>= French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ligurian2</strong></td>
<td>BN input $\rightarrow$ BN (+ bare DE under neg)</td>
<td>PA input $\rightarrow$ PA</td>
<td>$\cong$ Italian (modulo bare DE with neg)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Varieties with BNs+PAs (Italian, Lig2)

Optionality or division of labor? Do Italian/Lig2 PAs and BNs overlap in their interpretation or not?

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**Italian**

- **Costruisco** *(#delle)* case da quando sono nato.
  - ‘I’ve been building houses since I was born.’

- *(Del)* vino non l’ha spreccato, of.the.m.sg wine not it have.3sg wasted,
  - *(dell’)* altro si.
  - of.the.m.sg other yes
  - ‘He did not waste some of the wine but some other he did.’

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**Ligurian2**

- **Kustruiju** *(#dee)* ke da kwando so nafyu.
  - born
  - ‘I’ve been building houses since I was born.’

- *(Du)* vin, nu n a grejau:, of.the.m.sg wine not NE have.3sg wasted
  - *(de l)* atru fi.
  - of.the.m.sg other yes
  - ‘He did not waste some of the wine but some other he did.’

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**DIVISION OF LABOR ➔ Two functions**

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**Long-term habitual activities**

- ✔ BN/✘ PA

**Specific contexts**

- ✘ BN/✔ PA
Varieties with BNs+PAs (Italian, Lig2)

We formalize the distinction with this privative syntactic-semantic feature:

• $q(uantity) \Rightarrow$ the denotation of the nominal is restricted to an undefined quantity within its extension. (absence of $q = $ no quantity is implied).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$xN$</th>
<th>$xN+q$</th>
<th>$xN+q+specificity$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BNs</strong></td>
<td><strong>PAs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specificity requires $q$ to be present $\Rightarrow$ only PAs can be specific, BNs cannot.
Varieties with only PAs (French, Lig1, Emilian)

Modulo the presence of bare DE under negation (orthogonal to the classification, see the appendix):

**French, Lig1, Emilian → PAs cover both q(antity) and absence of q(uity):**

- *I ɛ an ke kostriusi *(adli) ka, ma a n*  
  it is years that build.1sg of.the.f.pl houses, but CL.subj not  
  u mai vist atse brøti.  
  ‘I’ve been building houses for years, but I’ve never seen such ugly ones.’

- *(Dal) vejn, a t n a mia struʃa, *(adl) ater si.*  
  of.the.m.sg wine CL you CL.part have not wasted of.the.f.sg other yes  
  ‘He did not waste a part of the wine but another part he did.’

For French examples see appendix and Ihsane (2008: 138).
Varieties with BNs + lex-q (Spanish, Friulian)

BNs reach up to the feature below q(antity), as in Italian and Lig1:

• I fa:s cases di kuant k i soi nasu:t. (Friulian)
  CL.subj make.1sg houses from when that CL.subj am born
  ‘I’ve been building houses since I was born.’

PAs are absent and other quantity markers take care of lexicalizing q(antity):

• Un pok di vin, lo à strasa:t, e un pok no. (Friulian)
  a bit of wine, CL.obj has wasted, and a bit no
  ‘He wasted a part of the wine but another part he didn’t.’
Modeling the variation: Two factors

- **Availability of BNs**: Friulian, Spanish, Lig2, Italian
- **Availability of PAs**: French, Lig1, Emilian, Lig2, Italian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Combination</th>
<th>xN</th>
<th>xN+q</th>
<th>xN+q+specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French/Emilian/Lig1</td>
<td>BNs</td>
<td>PAs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian/Lig2</td>
<td>BNs</td>
<td>PAs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish/Friulian</td>
<td>BNs</td>
<td>lex-q</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BNs and PAs are not basic Lexical Items/morphs**, i.e., their distribution cannot be directly modeled as a lexical parameter (i.e., Ln-x has the “BN morph” while Ln-y does not).

Is the **distribution of PAs/BNs related** to the **distribution of basic Lexical Items/morphs** in the language?
Hypothesis


Distribution of BNs/PAs related to the *morphology of gender/number* on N in the language.

No number morphs on N → no BNs

Autonomous number morphs on N (same for m and f) → no PAs (Stark 2016, Gerards & Stark 2020, Stark & Gerards 2020)
Number marking: ASIt

We checked the realization of the sg-pl couples we found in the ASIt:

**Masculine:** ragazzo-ragazzi, libro-libri, amico-amici, bambino-bambini

**Feminine:** ragazza-ragazze, donna-donne, sorella-sorelle, (sta)sera-sere

- Only regular marking, **no lexically specific classes** (e.g., palatal plurals in Friulian: /naːs/-/naːʃ/, see Vanelli 2010).
Number marking: ASIt, masculine

• Ø plural marking on N in Emilia, west Lombardy and Piedmont.

• Plural marking with an additional marker (= fem) in Friuli and some Ladin varieties in Trentino.

• Plural marking with vowel alternation in Veneto, east Lombardy, alpine Lombardy and Liguria.

‘the boy’ – ‘the boys’

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{sg -Ø - pl -Ø (Forlì: e ragaz-Ø – i ragaz-Ø)} \\
&\text{sg -Ø - pl -z [=fem] (Remanzacco: el frut-Ø – i fru(t)-s)} \\
&\text{sg -x - pl -y (Padova3: el tos-o – i tos-i)} \\
&\text{sg -Ø – pl -z [≠fem] (Cairo Monten.: er matot-Ø – i matot-i)}
\end{align*}
\]
Number marking: a correlation

Presence of number marking on N at the masculine $\rightarrow$ presence of BNs

**Feminine** nouns behave **differently** in these varieties (see the appendix for details):

The presence of overt number marking at the feminine does not invalidate the previous generalization.
Concluding remarks

• We have shown that the distribution of weak definites is tangential to the competition between BNs and PAs.

• We have shown that the distribution of BNs and PAs in the languages that have both is not randomic: PAs display a quantity reading, which in turn is implied in contexts where the indefinite is specific. BNs are non specific since they do not have a quantity reading.

• We have shown that the link between noun morphology and the absence of BNs is related to the absence of number morphology in the masculine.
Methodological generalizations

• It is possible to draw evidence for the presence/absence of syntactic structures from the way test subjects react to stimuli in the standard language.

• If a given structure is just not present in the dialect, test subjects avoid it in the dialect and use an alternative strategy, which can be helpful to understand the semantic value of the original structure in the input: Friulian speakers translate Italian PAs with a „some/a little“ quantifier.

• Some speakers display interference with the standard, at present we do not know whether this is a sign of linguistic change or not.
Thank you for your attention


Battye A. C. 1990. La quantificazione nominale, il veneto e l’italiano a confronto con il genovese e il francese. Annali di Ca’ Foscari 29, 27–44.


Pomino, N. this issue. French portmanteau morpheme: du as DP vs. du as PP. Studia Linguistica ??, ? –?.


Savoia, L. M., Baldi, B. this issue. Partitives and indefinites: Phenomena in Italian varieties. Studia Linguistica ??, ? –?.


Appendix
Excluding definites: Generic/weak definites

Proposal: definite articles have a generic/weak interpretation in all NIDs (as well as in Italian, French and Spanish, see Aguilar-Guevara et Al. 2014).

G/WDs = definites referring to a non-definite non-salient entity in the discourse. They are lexically constrained:

- Mia sorella compra **arance/case** tutti i giorni.
  My sister buys oranges/houses all the.M.PL days
- Mia sorella compra **le arance/le case** tutti i giorni.
  My sister buys the oranges/the houses all the.M.PL days
  ‘My sister buys oranges/houses every day.’
Varieties with only PAs (French, Lig2, Emilian)

**N.B.**, We take the presence of bare DE under negation to be orthogonal to the present classification

**French**

- *Je construis *(des) maisons depuis 30 ans.*
  - I build.1sg of.the.f.pl houses from 30 years
  - ‘I’ve been building houses for 30 years.’

- *(Des) filles étaient blondes, d’autres avaient les chevaux foncés.*
  - of.the.pl girls were blond others had the.pl hair dark
  - ‘Some girls were blond, others had dark hairs.’
  - (Ihsane 2008:141)

**Emilian**

- *I ē an ke kostruïsi *(adli) ka.*
  - it is years that build.1sg of.the.f.pl houses
  - ‘I’ve been building houses for years.’

- *(Dal) vejn, a t n a mia struʃa, *(adl) ater si.*
  - of.the.m.sg wine CL you CL.part has not wasted of.the.f.sg other yes
  - ‘He did not waste a part of the wine but another part he did.’
Varieties with only PAs: Lig1

Even if the usual translation of a BN in Lig1 is a PA, in the following sentence both BNs and PAs are acceptable (≠ French/Emilian)

• *E trent anni ke tiu fy (dee) ke.* (Lig1)
  is 30 years that pull.1sg up of.the.f.pl houses
  ‘I’ve been building houses for 30 years.’

• *Je construis *(des) maisons depuis 30 ans.* (Fr.)
  I build.1sg of.the.f.pl houses from 30 years
  ‘I’ve been building houses for 30 years.’

In order to assess the consistency of this possibility within the speakers of Lig1 we will conduct further questionnaires as soon as the conditions will make it possible again.
Bare DE in negatives, orthogonal feature

Bare DE under negation is attested both in varieties which realize the positive counterpart with a PA and with varieties which realize it with BNs.

• *Il a du papier.* / *Il n’ a pas de papier.* (Fr.)
  he has of the paper / he neg has not of paper
  ‘He has paper,’ / ‘He doesn’t have paper.’ (Ihsane 2008: 145)

• *Al vent nóma Ø café.* / *Te n crompesc mai de póm.* (Frontale di Snd.)
  he sells only coffee / you not buy.2sg never of apples
  ‘He only sells coffee.’ / ‘You never buy apples.’
Number marking: ASlt, feminine

‘the woman’ – ‘the women’

- sg -x pl -y+z (Remanzacco: la femin-a – lis femin-i-s)
- sg -x pl -y (Padova3: a don-a – e don-e)
- sg -x pl -Ø (Bologna2: la don-a – al don-Ø)
- sg -x pl -x (Livigno2: la fém-a – li fém-a)

Plural marking with **vowel alternation + additional marker** (= m /s/) in Friuli.

Plural marking with **vowel alternation** in Veneto, east Lombardy, Piedmont, north Emilia, Liguria.

“inverse” plural marking with **vowel deletion** in central Lombardy and south Emilia.

**Same marker for f.sg and m.pl** in alpine Lombardy.
Our fieldwork: Ligurian BNs+PAs+ bareDE

REALIZATION INDEFINITES LIGURIAN

- PA INPUT: 62.5%, 12.5%, 2.5%
- BN INPUT: 91.7%, 57.1%, 28.6%
- DEF INPUT: 81.7%, 8.3%

PA | BN | def | bare DE
Varieties with BNs + other (Spanish, Friulian)

Formalizing with the same syntactic-semantic features:

Spanish / Friulian:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{xN} & \text{xN+q} \\
\hline
\text{BNs} & \text{other}
\end{array}
\]

NO EXTENSION OF BNs $\rightarrow$ Two functions, two lexical items
Varieties only with PAs (French, Lig1, Emilian)

French, Lig1, Emilian → one lexical item (PA) for the two features:

\[ \text{xN} \quad \text{PAs} \quad \text{xN+q} \]

**SYNCRETISM** → Two functions, one lexical item

See Pomino (2019) for a similar approach
Number marking: a correlation

Presence of number marking on N $\rightarrow$ absence of BNs

AND

• The relation needs to hold for masculine. It is not necessary for feminine to be involved.

• For now, we found only the following „mixed“ pattern:
  • m. unmarked number on N + f. marked number on N